

# Incarceration to Employment: How Re-entry Populations are an Essential Element of the Workforce

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**Ken Gurka, Houston Community College**

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# Presenters

Tammy Green



DIRECTOR OF WORKFORCE & IT  
INNOVATION- CAREER SKILLS



Ken Gurka



SENIOR WORKKEYS  
PROGRAM COORDINATOR



# Introduction

“ If the correctional system is to be successful in placing job seekers in meaningful employment that meets employers’ expectations, correctional practitioners must prepare them for the workplace well in advance of their release.”

The Employer-Driven Model and Toolkit • Strategies for Developing Employment Opportunities for Justice-Involved Individuals

# Houston Community College Corrections Education Department



Established in 1973

1<sup>st</sup> community college in the country to be accredited by the Correctional Education Association

Serves over 3500 inmate students annually

30+ year partnership between the Harris County Sheriff's Office and HCC

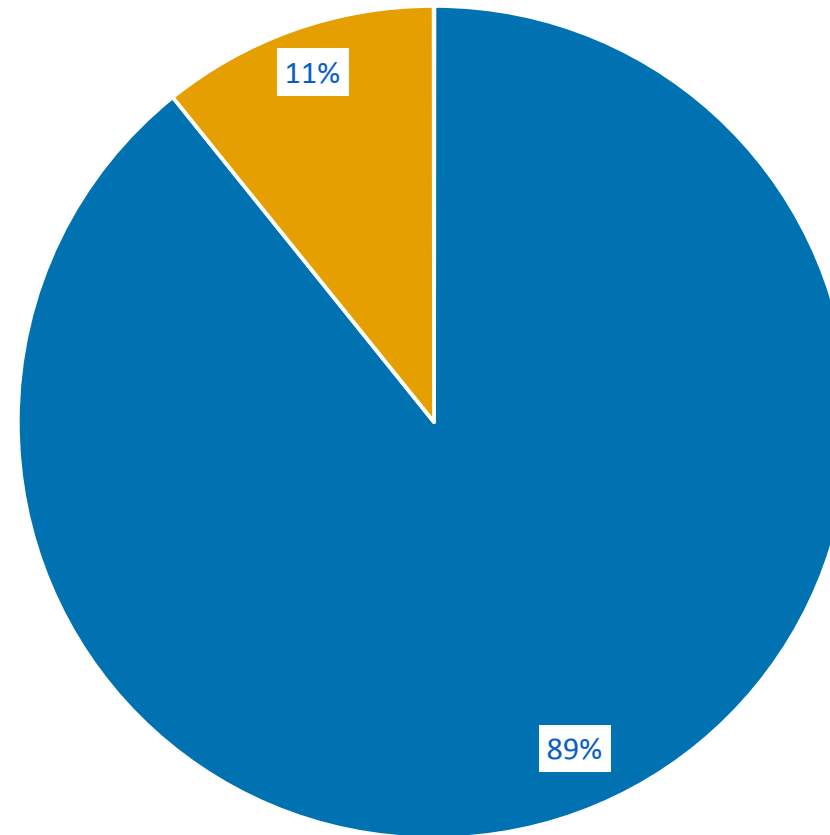
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# Harris County Jail System Population - March 2019

8160 individuals\* in the Harris County jail system

- Males = 7280
- Females = 880

\*Includes both felony and misdemeanor charges



■ Males ■ Females

# Corrections Education Courses:

## Vocational Courses

- A+
- Air Conditioning
- Auto Mechanics
- Auto Paint & Body
- Building Maintenance
- Basic Construction
- Culinary Arts
- Graphic Arts & Printing
- Tailoring
- Welding
- Logistics
- Forklift





# Recently Formed Advisory Board

- Advise, assist, support, and advocate for Correction Education on matters that will strengthen employment opportunities for former inmates, and reduce recidivism
  - Members: Harris County Sherriff's Office, Mayor's Office, Harris County Courts, US District Courts, Harris County Probation Office, The Workfaith Connection, Workforce Solutions, HCC staff and faculty





# Advisory Board Goals:

- Develop education, re-entry, and career pathways
- Identify roadblocks to successful re-entry
- Define employer needs
- Identify industry partners who will hire ex-felons

# Corrections Ed Program/ WorkKeys NCRC

First meeting in 2013

- great idea, but....
- manpower, funding....

NCRC testing began in 2017

## Environment

- classrooms in Houston's downtown jail facility + HCC campus
- no internet.....paper/pencil tests only, targets for instruction
- background checks
- training of faculty to administer assessments
- schedule....testing broken up over 2-3 days....early!!

# National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC)

- Workplace Documents
- Applied Math
- Graphic Literacy

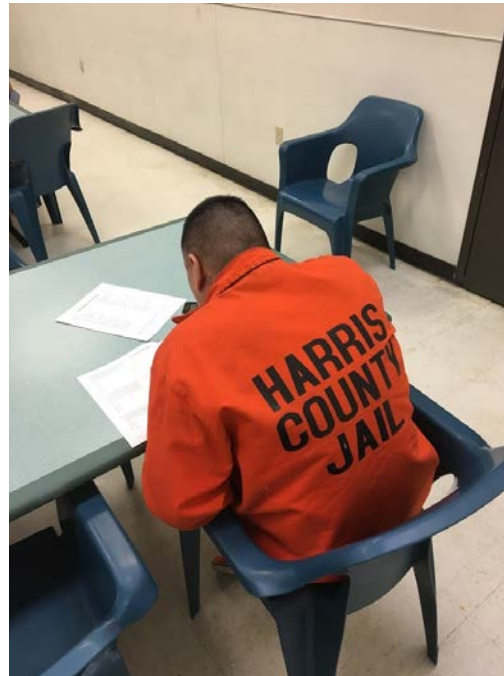
Each assessment is 55 minutes in length

# Corrections Ed Program/ WorkKeys NCRC

## Results

~ 500 inmates/students tested since 2017

- Platinum 4%
- Gold 10%
- Silver 31%
- Bronze 34%
- No cert 21%



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# Corrections Ed Program/ WorkKeys NCRC

- Lessons learned
  - Instructors love it....inmate/student enthusiasm....retesting
  - Spanish tests/Local scan
- Instructor success stories
- Graduation in downtown Houston jail facility
  - Harris County Sherriff Ed Gonzalez
  - Graduate student speakers



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# Program follow-up/contact info

**Robert Sims, Director, Corrections Education**

CORRECTIONS EDUCATION PROGRAM

4627 Crites Street, Houston, TX 77011

713.921.8738

<https://www.hccs.edu/continuing-education/departments/corrections/>

# Metropolitan Community College



## *Proven Strategy to Reduce Turnover and Training Costs*

- High Barrier Populations: 74% retention rate, 6 months after employment
- MCC Students: 87% retention rate, one-year after employment
  - Industry Average hovers around 50% for most industry sectors: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/jolts.t16.htm>
- Proven, verifiable means to determine applicant's job skills
- Increases on-the-job productivity

# Career Skills Development

## Partnership-

- Heartland Workforce Solutions & Douglas County Department of Corrections

## Elements-

- Work Ethic Certification (established by the Institute for Work Ethics)
- National Career Readiness Certification
- Registration with State Workforce System

## Logistics-

- Brought in Laptops- Education Building
  - Must provide 100% oversight
- Had Laptops approved
- Work Release-

# MCC Re-Entry Services

- Skills and interest assessments
- Career and educational goal setting
- Work readiness and life skills training (credit and noncredit classes)
- Registration assistance
- Employment support
- Introduction to MCC locations and resources

- Transition support
- Referrals to community agencies
- Continuous coaching and tutoring
- Credit analysis and transfer assistance
- Financial aid and scholarship application referral and support

# Credit Courses Inside State Facilities

1. Business and Entrepreneurship
2. Trades- Construction, Welding, Production
3. Information technology
4. College and career preparation

# Business and Employability

*Employers need a reliable way to measure skills to ensure that they are hiring the most qualified, trainable candidates.*

## **National Career Readiness Certification:**

- Identify and invest in employees who can make real contributions
- Find qualified workers- Connect to under and unemployed individuals served through Re-Entry programs.
- Proven, verifiable means to determine applicant's job skills
- Reduce turnover & training costs
- Increases on-the-job productivity
- Streamline Applicant Screening
- Employees have the employability/soft skills-

# Heartland Work Ready Communities

ACT, Inc. [US] | <https://www.workreadycommunities.org>

**ACT** Work Ready Communities

HOME ABOUT WRC FOR EMPLOYERS NEWS CONTACT US

**Become an ACT Work Ready Community!**  
Now accepting applications for a new ACT Work Ready Communities Academy  
Fall 2017  
[APPLY NOW! ▶](#)

**Attend the ACT Workforce Summit!**  
Hyatt Regency in Austin Texas  
Save the date!  
November 8-10  
[READ MORE - SUBMIT A PROPOSAL ▶](#)

STATES WITH STATE- OR COUNTY-LED ACT WORK READY COMMUNITIES  
*Hover over a state to learn more about NCRC activity there.*

What is an ACT® Work Ready Community?  
ACT Work Ready Communities (WRC) empowers states, regions and counties with *data, process and tools* that drive economic growth. Participants are leveraging the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC™) to measure and close the skills gap – and building common frameworks that link, align and match their workforce development efforts.

ACT NATIONAL CAREER READINESS CERTIFICATE TOTAL  
**3,795,698**

NCRC LEVELS:

Platinum	18,301
Gold	787,991

[Heartland Work Ready Community https://youtu.be/vpAlc3LHxpc](https://youtu.be/vpAlc3LHxpc)

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# Career Skills Coaching

*Participants are leveraging the **ACT National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC™)** to measure and close the skills gap — and building common frameworks that link, align, and match their workforce development efforts.*

- Establish partnership with industry/employers
- Key component of pre-apprenticeship
- Provide essential skills training customized for specific positions
- Assistance with pre-employment activities for potential candidates
- Coordinate Career Maps with resume and workforce training workshops
- Coordinate with Educational Pathways





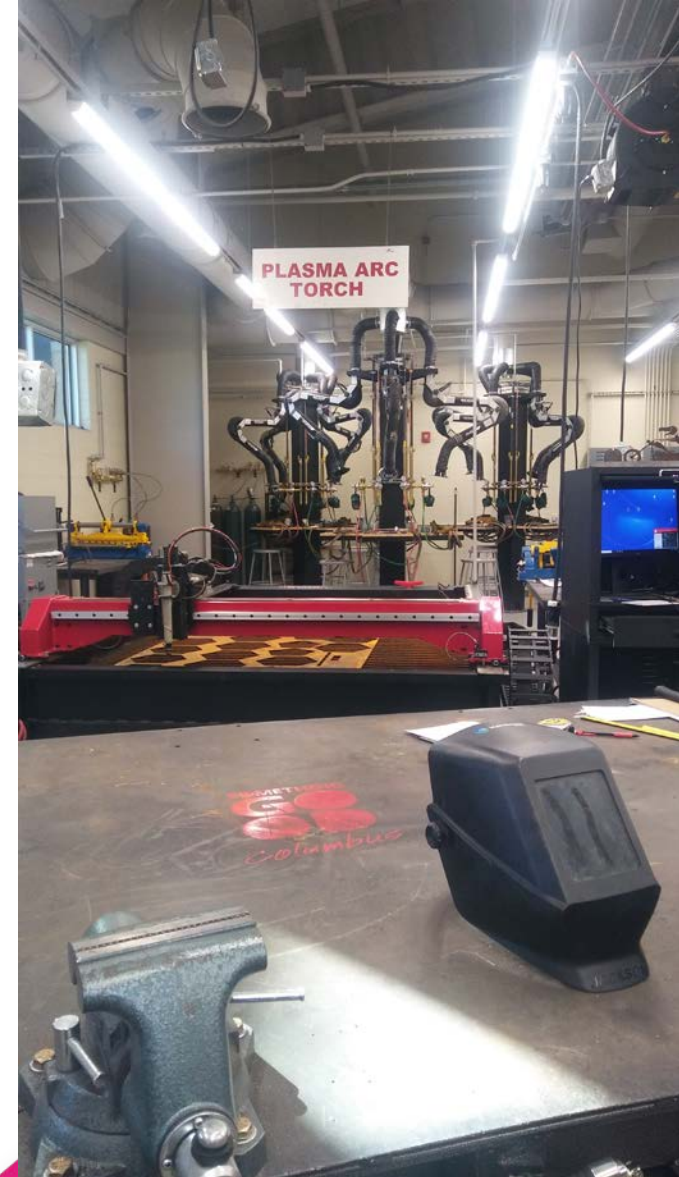
# Skills Based Approach

## Career Placement Program

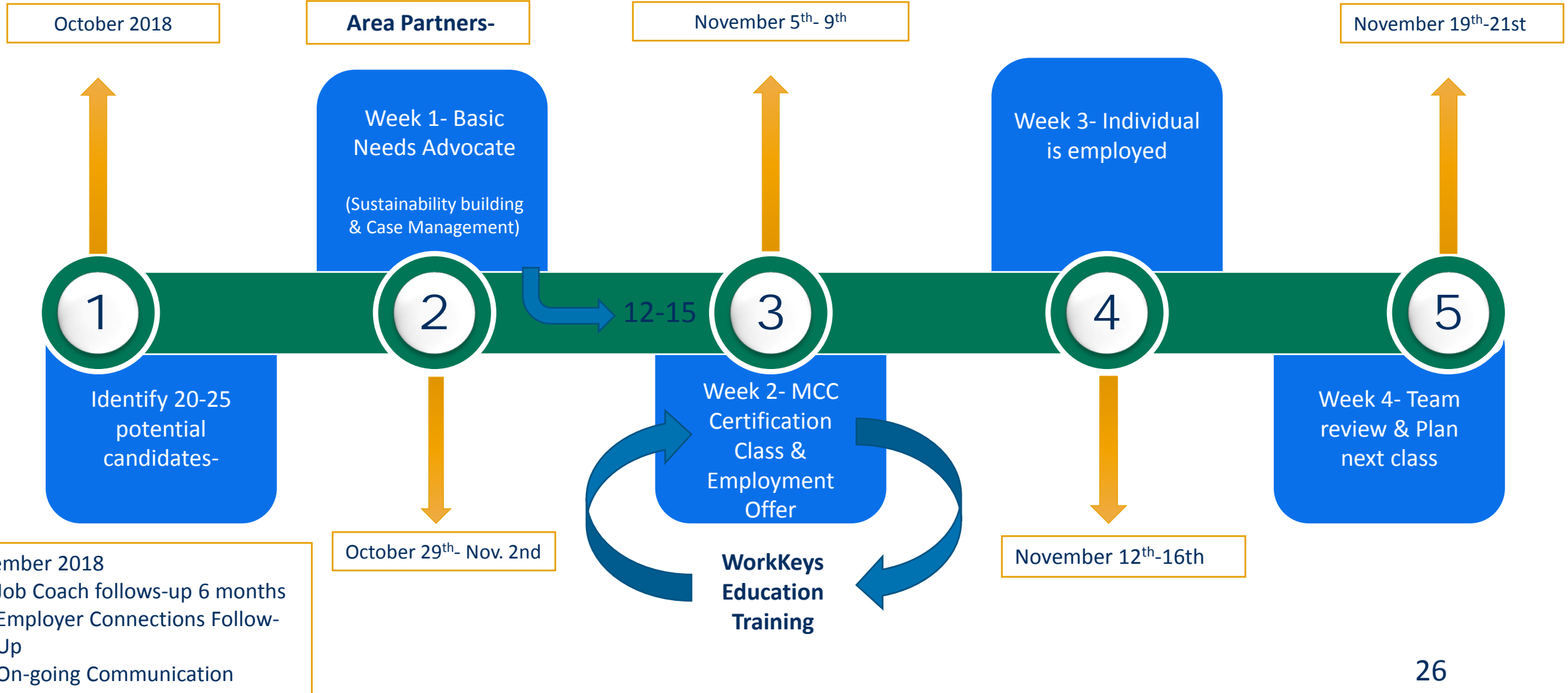
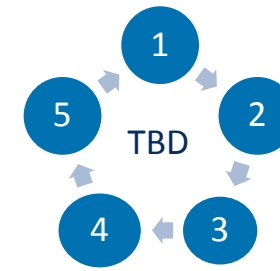
- Career Mapping
- ACT National Career Readiness Certification (NCRC)
- ACT WorkKeys Curriculum: Individualized Training Program
- Basic Computer Certification
- Customer Service Certification
- Work Ethics Certification

## Short Term Certifications

- Based on Career Mapping
- High Demand, High Wage
- CDL, Welding, Production Technician, Sheet Metal



# Timeline



# Follow-Up

- For more information:
- Tammy Green: [tjgreen5@mccneb.edu](mailto:tjgreen5@mccneb.edu)
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